

# VIOLIN AND PIANO SONATA RECITAL

RONALD PATTERSON, *violin*  
BROOKS SMITH, *piano*

*Wednesday, March 2, 1977*  
*Hamman Hall*

RICE UNIVERSITY

the  
Shepherd  
School  
of Music

Samuel Jones, Dean





## PROGRAM

Sonata in G Major for Violin and Piano, BWV 1019

Allegro

Largo

Adagio

Allegro

Allegro

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 75

Allegro agitato

Adagio

Allegretto moderato

Allegro molto

Camille Saint-Saëns

(1835-1921)

## Intermission

Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 108

Allegro

Adagio

Un poco presto e con sentimento

Presto agitato

Johannes Brahms

(1833-1897)

## NOTES

Sonata in G Major for Violin and Piano, BWV 1019

Johann Sebastian Bach

The G-major Sonata for Violin and Piano, composed ca. 1720 in Köthen, is one of a set of six sonatas for these instruments. Although the sonata is being played tonight on the piano, the intended keyboard instrument was the harpsichord.

During the Baroque period, the keyboard instrument – whether harpsichord or organ – usually functioned in ensemble music as part of the basso continuo: reinforcing the bass line and filling in the harmony according to numbers ("figured bass") provided by the composer. Bach was one of the few composers who wrote ensemble pieces with an obbligato keyboard part, i.e., a part in which every pitch is notated in the music rather than inserted according to a system of harmonic shorthand. In fact, in the G-major Sonata, the keyboard part not only stands on a par with the violin, but may even have more thematic significance.

As a cycle, the five-movement work exhibits contrasts in tempo, meter, key, and mood. Another element of variety is the combining of the sonata da chiesa (church sonata) and sonata da camera (chamber sonata) principles. The sonata da chiesa, which by 1700 was a form-type more than a designation for an instrumental piece played only in church, is evidenced in the through-composed nature of the slow movements, the tonal transitions from the slow to the fast movements, and the clear contrast of tempi among movements. The sonata da camera, which by Bach's time was synonymous with a suite of dances for instrumental ensemble, is most obviously present in the gigue-like character of the last movement (6/8 meter, wide leaps, imitation).

The first movement, which opens with metric ambiguity, is a typical Baroque fast movement: continuous 16th-note rhythm, spun-out motifs rather than regular phrase structure, imitation, linearity. In the few places where the keyboard has only a bass line, it



## NOTES (Continued)

may be appropriate for the keyboard to fill in harmony, thus functioning temporarily as a basso continuo instrument.

Similar in style to many a Corelli slow movement, the second movement opens with a walking-bass pattern in the lower keyboard part, while the violin plays a motif that is soon imitated by the upper keyboard part: a texture reminiscent of the trio sonata. The final chord acts as a harmonic transition into the next movement.

The third movement – violin tacet – is the most clearly structured movement of the sonata: binary form with double bar and repeat signs.

Opening with the keyboard, the fourth movement has a highly ornamented melody that is first heard over a walking-bass pattern and is soon imitated in the violin and the bass of the keyboard. Although no double bar and repeat signs are present, there is still a clear binary division. A relatively abrupt modulation to D major ends the movement and leads into the G-major tonality of the fifth movement.

The lively last movement, resembling a gigue, passes through several keys and has a clear recapitulation.

### Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 75

Camille Saint-Saëns

The Saint-Saëns Sonata #1, dating from 1885, is in two large movements rather than the more usual three-movement, fast-slow-fast plan. Each movement, however, contains two distinct sections, each of which corresponds to a movement of the Classical four-movement sonata cycle: fast (moderate), slow, minuet (scherzo), fast.

The first section – Allegro agitato – opens with the violin and piano doubling on a syncopated figure that soon is accentually altered by changes of meter (6/8, 9/8). The tension created by the metric dissonance and the transitional passagework is somewhat alleviated in the second-group area. Here, the F-major tonality and the longer, even note-values in the violin function as a contrast in mood to the previous material. After the recapitulation, which ends in G-flat major rather than in the home key of d minor, the music pivots via the pitch Bb into the next section, in E-flat major.

A loose ABA in form, the second section opens with a leisurely dialogue between the violin and piano. At the return of the opening material, the melody appears in the piano with accompanying trills and ornamental runs in the violin.

The first section of the second large movement corresponds in form and spirit to the scherzo movement of the traditional four-movement cycle. Spiccato bowing is featured.

Following without a break is the final section, a perpetual-motion finale that exploits the technical capabilities of the performers. Towards the end of the development, the violin plays the legato second theme heard earlier in the first section of the sonata. After the recapitulation, a rousing coda brings the piece to a climactic finish.

### Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 108

Johannes Brahms

The Sonata in d minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 108, is Brahms' third and last sonata in that medium. Dedicated to the pianist/conductor Hans von Bülow, the work was completed in 1888 and published the following year. Brahms and Joseph Joachim – the famous violinist and close friend of the composer – premiered the work in public in February of 1889.

Compared to the earlier violin sonatas in G major and A major, the d-minor is more overtly passionate, especially in its tumultuous last movement. Clara Schumann, the sensitive musician and friend who was often the first to hear about new pieces of Brahms, was very much taken with the sonata. She wrote to Johannes after hearing it:

What a wonderfully beautiful thing you have once more given us. I marvelled at



## NOTES (Continued)

the way everything is interwoven, like fragrant tendrils of a vine. I loved very much indeed the third movement, which is like a beautiful girl sweetly frolicking with her lover – then suddenly, in the middle of it all, a flash of deep passion, only to make way for a sweet dalliance once more. But what a melancholy atmosphere pervades the whole! The last movement is glorious.

The first movement, in sonata form, opens with a soaring melody in the violin over a faster-moving syncopated piano accompaniment. The expressive second theme – introduced by the piano – contrasts with the restlessness of the opening. The development section is remarkable: violin and piano figuration over a dominant (A) pedal point for the entire development – forty-six measures! Some of the violin figuration consists of bariolage, a technique whereby the performer plays a pitch alternately on an open string and an adjacent stopped string. A coda, which picks up on many of the devices of the development section, rounds off the movement, leading to a quiet close on a D-major chord.

The D-major ending of the first movement becomes the tonal center of the second movement, a lyrical Adagio in ABA form that opens with the rich, dark sound of the violin's G string. Typical of the composer is the use of hemiola, a device that produces accentual conflict with the established meter and thereby arouses in the listener a keener awareness of the return to the norm.

The third movement, functioning as a letup between the majestic second movement and the tempestuous finale, is ternary (ABA) in form. The give-and-take between the violin and piano in the A sections does indeed resemble frolicking between a girl and her lover, as Mme. Schumann so aptly put it.

Unlike the typical Classical chamber piece, the last movement of the d-minor is the weightiest. The gutsy agitation present at the start continues almost unabated for the entire movement, making it an exciting experience for both performer and listener. The only relaxation in the tension occurs at the contrasting tonal section – both in the exposition and recapitulation – in which the major mode and a more even rhythmic flow are present. But, even here, there are ominous overtones; the listener feels that this is an uneasy calm before another outburst. A dramatic coda culminates the action. Along with the last movement of the g-minor and c-minor Piano Quartets, this movement is one of Brahms's most exciting chamber-music finales.

Notes by Marcia Citron – (Dr. Marcia Citron is assistant professor of music at The Shepherd School of Music, Rice University).

RONALD PATTERSON is First Violinist of the Shepherd Quartet and Artist Teacher of Violin at The Shepherd School of Music, as well as Concertmaster of the Houston Symphony. A student of Jascha Heifetz and Eudice Shapiro, Mr. Patterson has played concerts throughout the United States, including over twenty performances as soloist with the Houston Symphony. The New York Times has characterized Mr. Patterson as an artist with "skill, authority, and imagination".

BROOKS SMITH is a consummate musician, one of the most eminent and widely respected accompanists in the country. Formerly a member of the faculty of the Eastman School of Music, he has recently become affiliated with the School of Music at the University of Southern California. He is the regular accompanist of Jascha Heifetz, with whom Patterson studied.

The next program in The Shepherd School of Music Chamber Music Series will be performed by the Shepherd Quartet on Wednesday, March 16, 1977, at 8:30 p.m. in Hamman Hall.